

The UNWORTHY COMMUNICANT's Plea answer'd, and the HOME-BAPTIST refuted;

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# S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

St. *Matthew's Bethnal-Green,*

*August* 11, 1751.

By SAMUEL ECCLES, M. A.

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TO THE  
PARISHIONERS of  
St. *Matthew's Bethnal-Green,*

This S E R M O N  
Is most humbly dedicated

By their most obedient

Humble Servant,

SAM. ECCLES.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF

St. Martin's Barbican Green,

THE SERMON

Is most humbly dedicated

By their most obedient

Humble Servant,

SAM. ECCLES.



I COR. xi. Part of ver. 34.

*— And the Rest will I set in order when I come.*

THE latter Part of this Chapter is chiefly designed to regulate some Disorders that had insinuated themselves into the Church of *Corinth*, and that more especially when they were assembled to commemorate the Death of Christ; they being so remarkably guilty of such Irregularities, and Excesses at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, that the Apostle could not forbear reprimanding them for their Indecencies, and Profanation of such a mystical and heavenly Feast, pointing out to them the Dangers, temporal and eternal, they thereby necessarily expos'd themselves to, even

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'till *He came, and set* Other Things *in Order*. 'Tis true, according to the Regulation of our Church, and the Order of her Rubrick, (the best Human Institution, undoubtedly, extant,) none of our Communicants can possibly become guilty of those Sins, Schisms, and Divisions here chargeable upon these *Corinthians*, and consequently liable to the Inflictions, and Punishments here denounced, tho' for which many, no less ignorantly than causelessly, absent themselves: Yet, among those that do come, there are some who do not commemorate with that Decency and Regularity, but that it is still necessary, in Imitation of the Great Apostle, to let them know, there are even yet some Things to be *set in Order*.

BEFORE I proceed any farther, I will just take the Liberty of a Word or two, to some well-meaning People, unhappily depriving themselves of  
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the Benefit of this Communion, and incurring the Danger of forsaking it; One Set concluding themselves *not duly prepar'd*, and Another not daring to partake, under a Dread and Apprehension of *unworthy Receiving*.

MANY, without Doubt, have been inadvertently drawn into this Error, by having Recourse to Books, wrote (I won't deny) with a Good Design, but whose Time would have been much better, and (I am certain) much safer employ'd, had they only apply'd themselves, for a right understanding of this necessary, preparatory Duty, to our short but comprehensive *Catechism*, rather than to those numerous Tracts, call'd *Weekly Preparations*, which (I must say) have been of no small Disservice to Religion, by making this essential, and most comfortable Part of it, so great a Terror to some, and so into-



lerable a Burden to Others. Neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles have injoin'd any thing like this. Repentance and Faith are the Only Requisites we read of: And the Practice of one Apostle, administering the Sacrament of Baptism (to which they both, I mean Repentance and Faith, are as absolutely necessary, and for which our Rubrick has as carefully provided in the Office of Infant-Baptism, as to the Receiving the Sacrament of the Supper of the Lord) plainly intimates to us, that no more then was, or is now to be expected.

THE Instance I bring to confirm this Doctrine, is, *St. Philip's* baptizing the *Eunuch*, an Account of which you have in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and that only upon his *Belief* in *Jesus*, after *Philip* had preached Him unto him. For, as they went on their way, they came unto a certain Water; and the Eunuch said, *See,*  
*here*



*here is Water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine Heart, thou may'st. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the Chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the Water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him.* But now, to obviate one Objection that may perhaps unjustly be raised, that this looks like denying the Necessity, or forbidding the Duty, of previous Examination; I must, in a few Words, tell them, that, those two Requisites aforementioned, *Repentance* and *Faith*, tacitly imply it: There can be no *Repentance* without examining and considering what it is that is to be repented of; and *Faith without Works*, I mean Works meet for Repentance, *is dead*. A formal or *weekly Preparation* can add no Efficacy to these; though these  
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may and will render that formal one needless. In short, our daily Prayers would only be an Abomination where these are wanting; and where they are not, let the receiving of the Sacrament be ever so unexpected, *full Purpose of Amendment of Life, and a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and the being in perfect Charity with all Men,* will render the Preparation every Way compleat. Whenever we address Heaven, either in public or in private, Forgiveness of Sins is one of our Petitions: In public I am certain it is, and in private I would not willingly mistrust it: And can we expect this Petition should be granted, without seconding it with Repentance? Another Part of our Prayers may be for Grace, and the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit; and here also *Faith* is no less requisite: For what else, without  
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it, could it be deemed, but a Mocking of God, to put up a Petition, to which we thought he would neither attend, nor intended to grant? Without these, therefore, we are neither proper Objects for the Eye of Heaven to behold with Compassion in private, nor to look down upon with Complacency in public: But wherever we kneel and prostrate ourselves, in our Chamber, or in the Closet, in our Pew, or at the Altar, repenting and believing, adoring and loving, our Presence will be agreeable, and our Prayers acceptable, to that God, who never denieth to any one, who with Faith and full Assurance asketh it of Him.

THERE is but one Thing, that at present I can recollect, deserving of any Notice; and some, indeed, would perhaps think this unworthy a Reply. —Namely—That if any, upon a hearty Repentance, and lively Faith,



together with perfect Charity, can obtain Remission of Sins, the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and whatever else they stand in need of, what Occasion is there for more? The Sacrament itself can secure no farther, nor is any farther Addition wanting! If this Way of arguing was to be allowed, thence might easily be inferr'd the Inexpediency of the Church itself, as well as both the Sacraments; and, in short, the total Neglect of all that Order and Regularity the Apostle, in the Words of my Text, thought proper to *come* and adjust; and 'tis not unlikely, but, upon some such weak and groundless Arguments as this, it is, that some Sects have entirely laid aside and neglected them. But this short Answer is sufficient to silence them, — That these Mysteries were instituted and ordained by *God*; and that it is our Duty to submit ourselves wholly to *his* Will and Pleasure, and



and not to follow, or lean to the bent of our own. Besides, they can never disobey any Divine Precept, without calling into Question the Truth of one Requisite, without which they are, on all Hands, agreed to be no deserving Objects of God's Notice; I mean that of their *Faith*. We cannot believe, that God would institute any Ordinance without an exprefs Design of having it observed; and if our Non-observance must not be construed a Want of Faith, I am sure it will fall under a blacker Denomination! The whole is this—God has commanded us to *eat his Bread*, and *drink of his Cup*: And if we will not wait upon Him at his Table; with what Assurance can we expect, how earnestly soever we may implore it, that he should give Ear to us at our Abodes? For alas! *O Man, Who art thou that repliest against God?* Conclude not then, you are any longer

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under his Favour or Protection, Pardon or Forgiveness, while you both knowingly and willfully refuse to purchase them upon any and all of those Terms He absolutely has appointed to dispense them.

THOSE who absent themselves, under the Apprehension of *unworthily receiving*, I shall answer in a few words. And *First*, as I before observ'd, while they come and receive in Conformity to the Rubrick, there is neither Danger nor Possibility, of their running into this Error. This Table, as it is now adjusted, cannot be to them a Table of Excess; and that is what the Apostle here cautions the *Corinthians* to avoid: But here the Poor have their Portion, and the Rich have no more; the Provision here made, in some Degree, resembling the *Manna* in the Wilderness, *those who take much having nothing over, and those who take little*

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*having*

*having no Lack. Secondly, what we read, according to our common Translation, He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, may, without any Impropriety, and equally as agreeable to the Original, as justly be render'd He that eateth or drinketh indecently or to Excess; and then, I hope, there are none here who have any Reason to suspect they can be guilty of receiving unworthily: Wherefore let them be cautious to avoid another Danger no less to be dreaded than that of unworthy receiving; namely, that of unworthy refusing.*

THUS much I thought necessary to premise, in order to remove those *Scruples*, which some well meaning People unwarily have entertain'd, to their own no little Prejudice.

PROCEED we now therefore, to regulate and correct some Errors and Mistakes, which too many, who constantly attend the Sacrament, are guilty of;



tho' I believe I may venture to say, guilty of, merely for want of Information; if not oftener led into them by putting a greater Confidence in those *Books* they are more careful to bring to the Altar, than *That only* which shou'd accompany them thither.

AND *First*, It is a prevailing Custom with many, at the Celebration of the Supper of the Lord, during the Time the Communion-Service is read, to be busied and altogether taken up, in hurrying over a Number of *Select* Prayers or Collects, when they really ought to give their closest Attention to the best and most perfect human Service that ever was compos'd. But let me prevail with you, no longer to continue this Practice; and that for the following Reason. 'Tis an actual *Separating* yourselves from the very Congregation you are assembled with; and while you shou'd  
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join in the united Devotion of the *Church*, by this Means you are privately addressing yourselves in *separate Forms*; thereby occasioning a kind of *Schism* and Confusion, under a mistaken Notion of being more than ordinarily Religious. Wherefore, my Brethren, to use the Words of the Apostle, with a little Variation, *when ye come together* to communicate, pray one *with* another, as well as *for* another: And if any Man be more than commonly devout, let him pray *at Home*; that ye come not together unto *Schism* and Confusion: Rather be conformable to the Rubrick, and be prepar'd to close every Prayer, (without repeating it, as the Manner of some is,) with your hearty *Amen*. Make your *Confession* with that Humility it enjoins, and listen to the *Ab-solution* with that Reverence and Thankfulness it requires; but beware how you attend to it. This is upon  
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no Account to be whisper'd over with the Priest: *He alone* is to pronounce it; and indeed the Difference of your Posture from his, plainly enough declares the Difference of your Duty. The *Priest* is ordered to *stand*, as One having Authority: And the Words in the Preamble of the Absolution, at Morning and Evening Prayer, expressly say, that *God hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers to declare and pronounce Absolution, or Remission of Sins*, which *the People, being penitent*, are to receive, not to give; and therefore they are enjoin'd to continue on their Knees, as the proper Posture of Penitence and Submission.

ANOTHER Custom not uncommon amongst us, and which I would willingly have laid aside, is; Many are so intent, even at the very Rails, and when the Priest is delivering the Bread, or the Cup, that, regardless of Him,  
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and his Words, while He is administering to them the Sacred Elements, in the most solemn Form, and in the greatest Conformity to our Lord and only Saviour's Holy Institution, they shall refuse to receive either at his Hands, 'till they have mutter'd over their ill-tim'd Soliloquy. By this Means, instead of *joining* with the Priest in that Prayer for them, contain'd in the Form of the Delivery of the Sacrament—*viz.* in that before the Bread—*The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul unto Everlasting Life,*—and that before the Cup—*The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul unto Everlasting Life:* I say, regardless of this most solemn Prayer, in these most comfortable Words, they are busied in petitioning for themselves, and render their own Prayers unseasonable,  
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and consequently ineffectual, by not attending to, and *joining* with, those of the Priest.

How or when this Custom first began, I shall not here trouble you with an Enquiry ; it being sufficient to shew you the bad Effects that must and will attend it, to make you to decline it : And the surest Method I can propose to effect that, will be to prevail upon you to have a more diligent Recourse to, and study more clearly and perfectly to understand, all the several Offices in our incomparable *Common-Prayer* ;—a Book which, of all others, (the *Holy Scriptures* only excepted) I here solemnly declare to you, I ever thought, since I had Reason to distinguish, the most *profitable for Doctrine, for Re-proof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness* ; and therefore shall principally, if not solely, ever recommend it to all others, Old and Young,  
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Sick and Infirm, as well as Vigorous and Healthy, as the best and most comfortable Companion in their several respective Estates; and that not only in public but in private.

ANOTHER little Indecency give me Leave to take Notice of to you; (for I would have all Things done according to the Intent and Design of our Rubrick) and that is, that we should *worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*. What I am going to mention to you may by some be practised for want of knowing better, and by others for not thinking at all. It is this. Some I find at a Loss, and others altogether indifferent, which *Hand*, whether Right or Left, to receive the Elements in: But, sure, the least Reflection must convince either of these, *which* ought to have the Preference, and consequently *in which* they ought to receive them. Don't imagine, or conclude from hence, that I am for desiring any of you to pay Homage

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or Adoration to those Elements: But certainly Reverence and Respect is due to them from all. I chose this Method of correcting this Indecency, that I might not be obliged, by a particular or personal Admonition, to singularize *whom* I intended to inform. For, by this Way it is not possible for any one to discover at whom I am pointing; and they have it in their Power hereafter to rectify their Mistake, in a Manner the most agreeable to us all, namely without Detection.

BEFORE I conclude this Discourse, I shall take the Liberty to say somewhat, in Opposition to a Custom generally prevailing amongst us, tho' expressly against the Rules and Orders of our Church; and that in Respect to the other Sacrament, namely *Baptism*.

SOME, indeed, may think I should have begun with that, as it is first in Order; nor can I say much in Contradiction to it: But the Words of my

Text more particularly relating to the Regulation of the *Supper of the Lord* inclined me to pursue the Method I have taken; and therefore that only shall be my present Apology.

OUR Rubrick orders, that *the People are to be admonished, that it is most convenient, that Baptism should not be administered but upon Sundays, and other Holy-Days, when the most Number of People come together; as well for that the Congregation there present, may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptized, into the Number of Christ's Church; as also because in the Baptism of Infants, every Man present may be put in Remembrance of his own Profession made to God in his Baptism: Wherefore, it further enjoins, that the God-fathers and God-mothers, and the People with the Children, must be ready, at the Font, either immediately after the last Lesson at Morning Prayer, or else im-*



*mediately after the last Lesson at Evening Prayer.*

I HAVE given you this Injunction in the very *Words of the Church*, which, by your Practice, you would force one to conclude you had either never *read*, or, which is much worse, that you do not regard. In direct Opposition to this Command, how many are so far from bringing their Infants before the Face of the Congregation, the proper Witnessees of their Admission into Christ's Church, upon either a Sunday, or a Holy-day, that they shall frequently make choice of those very Days for a Baptism huddled up *at Home*, to the less'ning that Congregation they ought in Reason, as well as Religion, to augment, according to the Number of their poorly-complimented Guests; and, as far as in them lies, to the depriving their Infants of that Grace and Benediction which God has promis'd at the Laver of Regeneration, and upon their  
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regular Reception into the Congregation of Christ's Flock ; but not at those Meetings, where nothing perhaps is regarded so little, and where all Church-Authority and Discipline is despised so much. You have your stated Places and Times also for the Admission of any Member into his particular Society, out of which he shall gain no Admittance; and can you think it justifiable, that any Time, or any Place, rather than the Time of Divine Service, or the House of God, shall be more proper, more suitable to admit a Child of God into the Fellowship of his Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord?

WHETHER the Pride and Ignorance of Parents, or the Avarice or Indolence of some Priests, first gave Birth to this unjustifiable Breach of Order, I shall not here take upon me to determine : But such a one it is, as now among the Grand and the Great has almost made Room for every other Office to be performed, if ever they are performed at all,

all, where the very Place were almost sufficient to taint even Sanctity itself. Those who indulged them in these Humors, and countenanced, and, as far as they could, authorized the Practice with their Presence, have, in Return, been openly and deservedly sneer'd and contemn'd: And too many there are, God knows, some-how advanced high in the Church, and whose outward Respect (for *inward*, I believe, they have as little as they desire or deserve) depends solely and entirely upon the Numbers they can oblige or command, assist or oppress, rather than upon any Merit or Desert of their own; equally indifferent whether the Rites and Ceremonies are regularly preserv'd, as those they have foolishly complimented with a dispensation for them. Hence has sprung up that Indifference to, or rather Contempt of, the Church among those who ought to be a Support as well as Ornament to it: And the Infection has of late strangely spread and dilated itself,

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to such a degree, that rather than not imitate these *Home-church* Nobility, (if I may be allowed the Expression, or they deserving of the Distinction) many, not altogether able to defray necessary Expences, shall pinch themselves on, to mimic their Superiors, in what they might really be superior themselves, and that by despising it.

LET me, therefore, prevail with you, rich as well as poor, no longer to give into any Custom, how greatly soever countenanc'd, which may seem but to intimate your Indifference to the Church. She has Enemies already too many. Endeavour all you can that she may not be divided against herself. The Doors, at proper Times, are open to you both. And for his Sake who blesteth you with Children, prevent them not entering into the Courts of his House; and that according to her Appointment, and agreeable to her Directions, whose Members you profess yourselves to be; that your Station in her  
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State *triumphant* may be exalted, in Proportion to your Obedience to her in her State *militant*. In Cases of Danger or Necessity, she has provided you with an occasional Office; and, in short, left nothing undone for you, if you will but do for yourselves.

TIME calls upon me now to draw to a Conclusion, or more might be advanced upon this Head. However, if this has its intended Effect, I shall not think it much to re-assume the Subject: In the mean Time only entreating you to remove the \* *Font* from the Place where it now stands *conceal'd*, into one more exposed to public View; that the Service may be *heard*, and the Congregation gratify'd with the *Sight* of that Ceremony by which we are all adopted *Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ*. Amen.

\* The Font is crammed up in a Corner, and entirely screen'd from the Body of the Church by the Church-wardens Pew.

B. Green, Aug. 11, 1751.

F I N I S.

